

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 00628 221238Z

45

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 ACDA-05 SAM-01 SY-05 USSS-00

OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 A-01 AID-05 PC-01 /101 W
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P R 221112Z JUL 75

FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3461

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0628

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: VIOLENCE INTENSIFIES IN ASMARA

REF: A. ASMARA 612 B. ASMARA 613

1. LEVEL OF VIOLENCE IN ASMARA AREA INTENSIFIED MARKEDLY
DURING WEEKEND OF JULY 19, 20. THIS FLARE-UP IS APPARENTLY
LINKED TO COMBINATION OF THREE COINCIDENTAL FACTORS: (1) RECENT
MILITARY SETBACK (REPORTED REF A); (2) REPRISAL FOR ELF
ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN AGAINST INFORMERS; AND (3) PRESENCE OF
PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE IN ERITREA. THESE FACTORS, COMBINED
WITH LESSER INCIDENTS, HAVE CREATED CLIMATE OF INCREASED TENSION
AND FEAR IN CITY JUST BEGINNING TO RECOVER FROM SEVERE TRAUMA
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PAGE 02 ASMARA 00628 221238Z

OF FEBRUARY-MARCH FIGHTING.

2. AMBUSH ON DECAMERE ROAD THURSDAY IN WHICH EPMB FORCES REPORTEDLY SUFFERED BETWEEN 70-100 KIA'S SET TONE FOR HOSTILE ATMOSPHERE WHICH CARRIED THROUGH WEEKEND AND CONTINUES TO PERSIST. EPMG TROOPS WHO SURVIVED AMBUSH WERE APPARENTLY DETERMINED TO TAKE OUT DEFEAT ON LOCAL POPULACE. REPORTS OF SPECIFIC REPRISALS ARE CONFLICTING BUT APPARENTLY GAVE EXCUSE FOR LATER INCIDENTS.

3. ELF ASSASSINATION CAMPAIGN (REPORTED REF B) PARTICULARLY NETTLED EPMG SECURITY FORCES AS ASSASSINS ALL ESCAPED WITHOUT INCIDENT, THUS DEMONSTRATING IMPUNITY WITH WHICH ELF COULD EXERT PRESSURE LOCALLY. KILLINGS OF ASMARA RESIDENTS WHICH TOOK PLACE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY APPARENTLY LED OFF BY ATTEMPTED BOMBING OF POLICE POST ON OLD AIRPORT ROAD. IN DIRECT RESPONSE EPMG TROOPS SHOT TO DEATH THREE YOUNG MEN IN NEARBY BAKERY. THIRTY-FIVE OTHERS IN IMMEDIATE AREA WERE DETAINED, 30 OF WHOM WERE RELEASED WITHIN 24 HOURS. KILLINGS CONTINUED SATURDAY AFTERNOON WITH THREE YOUNG MALE RESIDENTS SHOT TO DEATH AND THEIR BODIES LEFT IN FRONT OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH. THREE MORE YOUNG MALES WERE KILLED AND THEIR BODIES LEFT IN FRONT OF RAILWAY STATION, NOT COINCIDENTALLY THE SITE OF ELF ASSASSINATION EARLIER IN WEEK. ON SUNDAY MORNING EPMG REPRISAL KILLINGS OCCURRED. REPORTEDLY AS MANY AS FIVE ERITREAN MALES. REPRISALS WERE REPORTEDLY CONDUCTED BY SPECIAL UNIT OF EPMG SECURITY FORCES WHO ARE GENERALLY DRESSED IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES AND DRIVE IN UNMARKED CIVILIAN VEHICLES. CONTINUED REPRISAL KILLINGS WERE ALSO REPORTED ON MONDAY, INCLUDING FOUR KILLED MONDAY EVENING. EPMG FORCES HAVE REPORTEDLY BOASTED THAT THEY PLAN TO KILL TWO OR THREE ERITREANS FOR EACH SOLDIER OR INFORMER KILLED BY ELF.

4. THE WIDELY REPORTED TOUR OF PMAC CHAIRMAN TEFERI BANTE IN ERITREA HAS CAUSED EPMG FORCES TO BE ESPECIALLY TENSE. WIDESPREAD FIRING HEARD SATURDAY NIGHT WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN EFFORT BY LOCAL EPMG FORCES TO DEMONSTRATE THE HAZARDS OF SERVICE IN ASMARA AND ERITREAN REGION. TEFERI BANTE'S RETURN TO ASMARA TUESDAY MORNING RESULTED IN NUMEROUS ROADBLOCKS THROUGHOUT ASMARA AND VISIBLE PRESENCE EPMG FORCES ON MAJOR STREETS AND THOROUGHFARES.

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PAGE 03 ASMARA 00628 221238Z

5. THESE THREE FACTORS ARE INTERWOVEN WITH OTHER MEASURES TO FURTHER DEMONSTRATE EPMG CONTROL OVER ASMARA. GASOLINE IS NOW UNAVAILABLE TO LOCAL RESIDENTS AS ALL GAS STATIONS HAVE BEEN CLOSED BY DECREE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. IN ADDITION THE DETENTION OF ASMARA RESIDENTS CONTINUES WITH FORMER EXPO SITE (LATER TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS OF 1ST DIVISION) CONVERTED INTO INTERROGATION SITE FOR SUSPECTED ELF/PLF SUPPORTERS. MANY

ERITREANS ARE KNOWN TO STILL BE DETAINED AT THIS SITE, INCLUDING JOSEPH JACOB, WHO IS BROTHER-IN-LAW OF PRESENT MINISTER OF JUSTICE EMANUEL ANDEMICAHEL AND MANAGER OF MAJOR TRADING FIRM OF GELLATLY, HANKEY & CO. IT IS ALSO REPORTED THAT AREA BEHIND EXPO SITE HAS BEEN TURNED INTO MASS GRAVE FOR DETAINEES WHO WERE EXECUTED.

6. COMMENT: INCREASED TENSION IN ASMARA HAS LED CONGEN AND KAGNEW PERSONNEL TO RESTRICT UNNECESSARY ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CITY. IT IS EXPECTED THAT ATMOSPHERE OF TENSION WILL NOT LAST INDEFINITELY AND THAT TENSIONS WILL SUBSIDE AS NUMBER OF INCIDENTS DECLINE IN COMING WEEKS.
SHERRY

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